

A blow from the outside was the only

"Thet's right!" shouted lke as a second blow caused the door to spring on its linges. "The sooner ye make a hole through thet partition, the more likely

I am to reach ye!"

He emphasized the remark by drawing the slide and discharging his revolver through the sperture. A yell and a sudden shuffling of feet without greeted the

For a time all was quiet. Mosely drew For a time all was quiet. Mosely drew the slide again and reconnoitered. The result was apparently not satisfactory. He snapped the catch back suddenly and turned sharply upon Humly Jim.

"It's jest ex I reckoned," he said quietly. "They're comin back agin, and this time they've got a timber with 'em, and thet door is goin in. I reckon we'll make a division of forces."

He drew the bolts on the inner door as he stoke.

He drew the bolts on the inner door as he spoke.

"Call him," he whispered.

Humly Jim complied. A second later Bruce stepped through the opening. The deputy grasped his, revolvers and disappeared within. Ike Mosely turned and faced the ranchman in the moonlight.

"Pardner," he said, placing his hands upon his shoulders and gazing into his eyes, "ye don't need me to tell ye thet this'll be a close call for you and me, and mebbe one or both of us is goin home. But, by the living God, I'm here to tell ye thet thar's no man I'd rather fight for or die alongside!"

He pressed a pair of 6-shooters into his

to tell ye that than's no man I'd rather fight for or die alongside!"

He pressed a pair of 6-shooters into his companion's hands as he spoke.

"Now, then," he said, setting his square shoulder against the shoulder of Bruce, and cooking his pistols, "let 'em come on, d——'em! They'll find they've got more than they bargained for, or else I've forgotten how to shoot!"

A rush from without drowned his words as a blow delivered with the force of a battering ram caused the door to leap inward. A shower of dust and plaster fell to the floor. A second rush and shock followed. The door fell from its hinges with a crash, and the moon and shock followed. The door fell from its hinges with a crash, and the moon shone boldly in and streamed upon the stone pavement. Bruce and Mosely retreated into the shadows of the doorway. Here, unseen by those without, they covered the entrance with their cocked revolvers. The moonlight flashed coldly on the glistening barrels full in sight of an excited crowd of men poising a heavy bear.

ulet and peaceable before they take him out a corpee. We've sworn to string him up, and es we're ten to your one ye might as well be sensible and give in."

"You think so, do you?" retorted the sheriff through his set teeth. "I'll let you know I think different! I'll allow that me and Jim kin hold only one end of this jail, but thet's about what we calculate to do. Of course of you kill him in th's meantime I ain't responsible, but the first man of you thet steps across that doorsill is gone in—I give

you that flat!"
The sheriff had hardly spoken when

The sheriff had hardly spoken when the door of the inner room swung quickly back and Humly Jim appeared. He was not visible to the throng without. Closing the door behind him, he leaned against it. His voice came distinctly to to the ears of Mosely and Bruce.

"Thar ain't no use for me to put in any more time in thar," he said slowly.

"Thar ain't no prisoner to guard. Leastwise none thet's likely to git away. Thet last voiley settled Lem's account for good and all, I reckon. The durned idgits killed the wrong man. Prups thet bein the case you've got more use for me here in front."

Mosely was about to whisper some hurried command to his deputy when a second volley crashed through the inner room, splintering the woodwork and beams. The sounds of this terrific fusillade had not entirely ceased before a sudden noise borne on the night wind came to their ears from without. A low rumble as of distant thunder shook the earth, and the windows of the jail rattled with a strong vibratory tremor. The crowd and the windows of the jail rattled with a strong vibratory tremor. The crowd about the shattered door turned in surprise. A clear, ringing cheer burst suddenly upon the still night. There was a sound of galloping hoofs and a murmur of many voices, and with a sudden rush and tumult a mounted cavalcade swept round the jail, the moonlight flashing upon their brandished rifles. In an instant the building was surrounded.

The leader of the party charged the group of soldiers before the doorway at a gallop, reining up his horse so fiercely that the hoofs of the animal struck fire in the resisting gravel.

"Fall back!" shouted the imperative voice of Colonel Hunt. "Fall back, now, all of you, and disperse! This business has gone far enough."

At the sharp command Forsker's men, realizing they were now between two firm, acuttered in all the stions. The

sent you down our way at this hour o' the night?"

Colonel William Hunt removed his hat, and the moonlight shone full upon his serious face.



Cynthia Dallas staggered trembling to

"You've struck it, Mosely," he said solemnly. "An out and out angel and no mistake. I ain't no call to take to myself any credit for this yer night's bizness. It all belongs to a woman—a little gal es galloped 10 miles to bring me word, and notwithstanding hez rid with us every step of the way and put the blush to every man in my troop—a gal ez I'd bank on ag'in half the men I ever see and who's too good a durned sight for the best man in the state."

And even at this moment pale, breath-less and disheveled Cynthia Dallas stag-gered trembling to the doorway and sank fainting on the threshold.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIII.

With the arrival of the rangers and their armed investment of the jail at Bradford post the open animosity agains' Henry Bruce vanished. Such was the awe inspired by these frontier police that no further attempt at outbreak followed. At 9 o'clock on the following day a mounted escort accompanied Bruce to the courthouse, and a preliminary examination was held. Phil Kernochan had arrived during the night, bringing with him Judge Natches, the ablest lawyer of the circuit. The prisoner found himself surrounded by influential counsel and friends.

The presiding justice conducted the proceedings with that perfect impartiality and absence of judicial dignity for which he was noted. With his hat on the back of his head, a short black pipe in his mouth and untrammeled by coat cravat or collar, he lent himself serious

on the glistening barrels full in sight of an excited crowd of men poising a heavy basm.

A moment's pause ensued. The soldiers, thinking that the weapons were those of the sheriff and his deputy and that Bruce was in the interior of the jail, were averse to unnecessary bloodshed. At this instant there was a crash of musheity in the rear, accompanied by the fingling of glass and the whistling of bullets. The leader of the party held up his hand to parley.

"I reckon you hear that, Ire Mosely," he said, with an oath. "The boys are rakin your lockup from the windows. You might es well hand that feller over quiet and peaceable before they take him out a corpee. We've sworn to string

His honor's phraseology is necessarily lost in the above paraphrase. He said, I believe, that he "wasn't tryin no case in no place where everybody was dead sot on hangin the prisoner first and hold-in court arterward." But doubtless the legal principle of abstract justice was implied in this Lone Star dictum. The trial was set down for the first week in September at the neighboring county test of Oskaloo.

Sheriff Mosely was overjoyed at this

"Why, thet's right whar I was born and brought up," he said to Bruce, slapping him on the back as they left the courtroom. "I own thet place. Yer hand, pardner; I congratulate you on yer luck. When the time comes round, I'll Perhaps the first intimation that Edith Perhaps the first intimation that Edith run down that and see ef I can't scare up a reasonable, fa'r minded and onprejudiced jury es'll view this business in a true and holy light."

The confidence of Bruce in his even-

tual acquittal was naturally increased by this reassuring statement.

by this reassuring statement.

None the less did Phil Kernochan re-lax his exertions in his partner's behalf.

He consulted earnestly with Colonel Hunt, who with a party of his men conducted them back to the Mesquite valley ranch. Judge Natchez—a man of wide experience in Texan practice and pleading—outlined several modes of action, but was inclined to lay great stress upon Sheriff Mosaly's conversition and upon Sheriff Mosely's co-operation and suggested that Mr. Buck Jerrold be approached as a possible valuable ally. cordingly a few days later Kernochan rode over to the latter's ranch and held

rode over to the latter's ranch and held a conference with that gentleman.

Mr. Jerrold had been already importuned in behalf of Henry Bruce. He had paid a visit to the Dallas ranch the previous evening and had heard from Cynthia's own lips an account of the storming of the jail at Bradford post and the rescue that followed. So pathetically had Cynthia wrought upon the sympathies of her auditor that Jerrold had been unable to resist the appeal. It was perhaps proof positive of peal. It was perhaps proof positive of the cowman's love for Miss Dallas and his own generosity of soul that he prom-ised his assistance, although in giving it he was aware that he stood in his own

He received Kernochan with that grav-ity of demeanor for which he was noted,

sudden freak o' yours for a moonlight pasear sorter took the sand out o' them sojers, natch'ally, didn't it? What angel sent you down our way at this hour o' whisky'd stand the best show. Ye see," he said, pulling at the straps of his heavy boots and glancing at them as if for inspiration, "the poppylation is thet rigid and narrer minded that it needs suthin of thet nature to get the milk o' human kindness to flow. They want suthin to start 'em!

"Ef I could go down thar now in the in-terests of justice and jest float the town, jest play the millionaire and do the generous thing—it might cost you suthin —but I reckon—I reckon," said Mr. Jer-rold cautiously, "we might get an honor-able rold squar deal, even in thet benight-

ed settlement "It's ag'in the natur o' things," con-tinued Mr. Jerrold, "to look for favorable results on any other ground. Them

able results on any other ground. Them fellers down that way, I reckon, are what Parson Centrefitt calls 'pestimists'—they're malarial in their tastes, and they'd get things crooked on gen'ral principles. Accordin to their view, everything is crossgrained from the start. They jest natch'ally look at things on the bias—so to speak.

"They'd allow, for instance, thet Hen-ry Bruce laid all night for Foraker out on the San Morcus road; that he rounded him up and started him on the 'long trail' because he was stampedin his plans and prospects. Thet's what they'd 'a' done, and thet's the way they'd look at it. You and me knows different—thet it was done in self defense. But it'll need judicious maniperlatin to make them liberal minded and to git'em at all charitably disposed. They must be all charitably disposed. They must be elevated to thet p'int. Then ye'll git justice. Their moral natur sorter leave

off where the rest of us begin."

He paused and looked seriously at Kernochan to note the effect of his words. Evidently gathering that, from his visitor's previous opinion of the town of Okaloo, his logic was beginning to tell on him, he summed up his position in a few

"Ef I rec'lect, I was a leetle onsettled myself that night in San Marcus, and I ain't no way sartin thet Henry Bruce didn't take a gratifyin contract off my hands. You go to work, Mr. Kernochan, and engage the best lawyers and argify-ers the state can produce. Them'll be necessary, as the prosecuting attorney is dead ag'in ye from the fust, but ex for the Oskaloo part of the bixness, me and Ike Mosely'll run thet. And I reckon," concluded Mr. Jerrold, rising and permitting a grim smile to relax the corners of bia month. of his mouth, "I reckon the jury at thet trial will be in compytent hands." Phil Kernochan rode back to his ranch

under the impression that the difficulty of combating local prejudice at Oskaloo was materially lessening. But Mr. Buck Jerrold was gloomy and dispirited all the

afternoon.

It was not long before the delight with which Miss Stafford greeted the release of Henry Bruce gave place to a very different state of mind. In the enthusiasm of his return to the Mesquite valley ranch, she had detected no change in his manner toward her. Accustomed from infancy to her own way, the idea of a rival in the regard she unquestionably manifested for the young ranchman had probably never seriously crossed her mind.

She had accepted the interest of Bruce complacently, laid claim to his attentions as if by a species of divine right and exhibited toward him a certain air of proprietorship with the presumption of her sex when conscious of ts attractions. To quote the words of Judge Natchez, who was for professional reasons some time a guest at the Mesquite valley ranch, the young lady's attitude toward Henry Bruce was that of the "holder of a first mortgage bond wherein the equity was decidedly micro-

Miss Stafford very soon awoke to an intelligent distrust of her position, and then to a conviction that her power was

received of a change in Bruce was in his manner of receiving her slighting allusions and half contemptuous mention of Miss Dallas. Originally he had passed these over with the good humored cynicism of a man of the world. But now anything of the sort plainly irritated him, and persistence in the matter provoked a retort or possibly a sudden sar-casm. With singular infelicity of epi-

It will be understood that Bruce cherished a different sentiment.

His old interest in Cynthia—the interest that he had felt since that first day when she had peeped down upon him in the gloomy chasm with her fragrant suggestions of hemlock and pine—woke anew in his heart, and with it a sense of gratitude from which, I trust, mankind, in the rarity of feminine constancy, is not entirely exempt. This interest deep-ened as the spring advanced and the season slipped into summer. He grew quite in the habit of riding over to the Dallas ranch and passing the morning in Cynthia's society. Here, although he persuaded himself that his attitude toward the young lady was merely such as a brother might hold toward an affectionate sister, he was often astour to discover with what winged feet the hours flew overhead, and that familiar bjects took on a sudden association and charm from the witchery of her com-

tempered possibly with a certain resignation which under the circumstances increased the latter's good opinion. Kernochan unfolded his errand in a few words. Buck Jerrold filled his pipe, lighted it, and seating himself on a nail keg in the dooryard reviewed the situation solemnly as follows:

"Thar ain't but one argyment to bring to bear on the town of Oaksloo," he said, deliberately crossing his legs, "and thet's whisky! I've been down thar, off and on, for the last 10 years, and I never

while playing some chord or explaining some accompaniment there stole into the gentleman's face an expression so win-ning and tender that the girl's sweet eyes grew downcast and tremulous it was the seal of the instructor doubtless that prompted this. Certainly for its oppor-tunities and possibilities the light guitar has reason to be appreciated, and there slumbers in its strings a sympathy that proves a powerful ally to sentiment. Howbeit, whatever may have been the

experience of her companion, Cynthia learned little from the instrument of which her heart had not been eloquent before. But she acquired a certain dainty dexterity, and as this musical intercourse gave rise to much conversation and confidential disclosure it was not long before Bruce was well acquainted with all her girlish dreams and fancies—except one, in regard to which Cynthia said nothing, but preserved the evasive silence

of womankind. It shone in her eyes that kindled at his coming, in the quick color that mounted to her cheek at his approach, in the sudden delicious tremor that seized her when he drew near, and the indescribsble thrill that set her heart to throbbing whenever his hand touched hers. In place of that dejection that once op-pressed her, a glad gayety and light heartedness attended all her movements. Joy laughed in the sunlight, and mirth came to her on the wings of the wind. The breeze that rocked the tree tops of her bower, letting slip bright shafts of light to stray within, set her all uncon-

sciously to singing.
Old man Dallas noted the change and grew reserved and thoughtful. After Cynthia's daring ride to Bradford post he had taken occasion to read his charming daughter a long homily on the "danger of young women showin all to onct how much store they set by any young feller." According to Alcides, it was the duty of the sex to "set back and let things hump themselves according to their natch'ral course." Cynthia had accepted this rebuke meekly. She was now uniformly affectionate to her father.



Old man Dallas noted the change and grew reserved and thoughtful.

"I reckon them new bonnets she was talkin about must have got up to San Marcus," remarked this cautious skeptic, who was inclined to refer all feminine sdvances to mercenary motives. Find-ing, however, that his daughter's caresses were quite gratuitous, he shook his head gravely with renewed distrust. It was only after a doleful rehearsal upon his fiddle of his symphony to "Married Life" that he appeared to have pierced the heart of the mystery.

ford ceased to allude to the frequency of the visits paid Miss Dallas by Henry Bruce; it was about this time that she became apparently unaware that any such young woman existed; it was about this time that she began to drop stray hints in regard to certain admirers at the north, for whom she cherished an extravagant interest--an interest which speedily began to manifest itself in correspondence; it was about this time that she gave out that these parties were importuning her greatly to return home. but before doing so she meditated a coup d'etat by which she trusted to wring the heart of her rival, and if possible "lure this tassel gentle back again."

And so the summer days passed by until September came and with it the momentous trial at Oskaloo.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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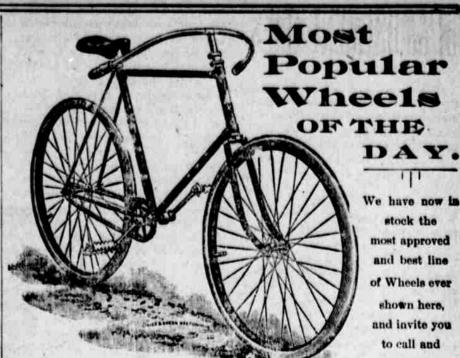
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